

# a letter from the future

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I want to share with you a letter that has fallen into my hands. It was written fifteen years in the future by a person who is totally ignorant of the changes that have gone on in those fifteen years--to a person equally uninformed.

(Editor's note: This letter was read by Professor Gearhart at an animal rights rally held on the University of California, Berkeley, campus in April, 1984)

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(To my friend Mabel in the Tibetan monastery, from Edith on leave from the monastery to travel and learn.)

Well Mabel,

You won't believe it. The whole world is transformed. I came immediately from Tibet to what I thought was the Primate Center at Davis, California, to attend what I knew would be World Day for Laboratory Animals. After all, it was April 24, wasn't it? And had we ever failed to have a rally on April 24?

But what did I find? Did I find the Primate Center? No! No Primate Center. Not even the ruins of a Primate Center. In fact, I didn't even find Davis, California. Only a big spread of adolescent trees that they now call the Sacramento Forest--a Restored Natural Habitat for Animals that stretches the width and length of the valley.

Well, right away I determined to get to the bottom of this; so, I set out for Berkeley, hoping to find some of our old Animal Rights Activists. And, indeed, I did find Eric Mills, right there in the Life Sciences Building on the U.C. campus, the one built in 1986. He was running the child-care center there (which takes up the whole ground floor of the building). All the rest of the building is devoted to a national center for the development and maintenance of animal-free methods of scientific research. It seems that when Berkeley took the big step back in 1984 and decided to go the route of

"alternatives," that sort of gave permission to all the other universities across the nation to do the same thing. "You won't find a lab animal anywhere in the United States," Eric assured me.

The Life Sciences Building, by the way, is outfitted in its fundamental alternative equipment by millionaire Charles Rivers, who used to make big bucks breeding lab animals. Rivers, right after his conversion, donated from his own pocket all the equipment.

As we walked by Sproul Plaza, I was astounded to see a twenty foot high statue of a white rat, so lifelike that I had to stop and stare. It has a wonderful plaque attached that talks about how this is a monument to all the millions of rats who have been sacrificed in the name of the Behavioral Sciences. (And another nice note: apparently, after 1990 all the Ph.D. degrees that had ever been granted for experimental work done with rats, mice, or guinea pigs in the fields of psychology were automatically revoked. Their holders have had to return to graduate school to earn their degrees all over again in more legitimate investigations of knowledge.)

Next, Eric took me across Giannelli Square to meet--you'll never guess!--Harry Harlow! Dr. Harlow, you remember, is the guy who isolated and battered all the baby monkeys just to prove that baby monkeys love their mothers. Well, there was Harlow, a completely changed man. He moved to Berkeley right after this enlightenment, and he and Dr. Edward Taub (also totally changed) are



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still raising money for restored habitats by crawling on their hands and knees coast-to-coast every year in penance for the suffering they caused primates. They give speeches in every major U.S. city. Taub has two little rhesus monkeys that travel on his shoulders. They won't leave him. We're not sure whether they actually love him or are just keeping him in line.

Then I flew to Washington, D.C., to interview Gretchen Wyler, whose offices are in the old Pentagon Building. What you and I hadn't realized is that since the U.S. Department of Defense was phased out, the Pentagon has been converted into the home of the new Environmental Protection Agency, which Gretchen heads. She is undoubtedly the most influential of all of President Jesse Jackson's cabinet members. Well, anyway, I interviewed Gretchen to find out how all these changes have taken place. She told me with all her characteristic verve.

It all began, really, just after you and I went to Tibet, and it's all due to a phenomenon called "The Big Grab." Apparently, some fairy godmother late in 1984 decided to give to all Animal Rights Activists the Power of the Irresistible Hug, quite natural for them, actually, probably because of their frequent association with loving animals. This meant that fighters for animal rights became especially good at going up to strangers, flinging open their arms, and embracing them. And miraculously, everybody they embraced became a staunch advocate of animal rights! Well, it didn't take our folks long to realize what a politically powerful tool this was, and there soon developed the "Hug-a-Researcher" program, whereby instead of arguing with the research establishment, our folks just set out to corner and hug each scientist and lab worker. Of course, some of the scientists resisted and even ran at the sight of an ever-loving Animal Rights Activist. You can understand why they might run, Mabel, because by that time our folks had begun to develop a little "Arf! Arf!" that went along with each hug.

But nobody could escape us for long, because we simply infiltrated their AAAS meetings and their AMA conventions. Rumor has it that it was our fearless leader herself, Virginia Handley, who finally cornered and hugged Dr. Phyllis Dolhinow.

For a long time, of course, there was no

one who would volunteer to hug Dr. Russel De-Valois, and they thought they might have to pay someone to do it. But once again, Gladys Sargent came to the rescue. She cornered him behind his bin of dying cats and dogs, dragged him out, and gave him not only a hug but a huge kiss, as well. He was transformed immediately, they say, and did his penance for the next ten years on Greenpeace's Rainbow Warrior, sailing under the orders of Captain Betsy Swart.

Well, the letter to Mabel goes on, drawing the picture of a near-perfect world. It's a wonderful fantasy. But we haven't yet got the fairy godmother to give us that magic to our hugs. (I do think, however, that we ought to keep practicing our hugs, anyway, in case something magical should happen!)

All we've got is what we've always had: our rage, our reverence, our compassion, and our commitment. I remind myself: ONE DOES NOT NEED HOPE TO UNDERTAKE OR SUCCESS TO PERSIST.

Even if we had no hope, which we certainly do, even if we had no success, which we most certainly have had, will have, still we'll undertake, still we'll persist. The process is vital in itself--it sends energy to the animals (I do believe that), and, almost as important, it is vital because of what it does for us, for our integrity.

We fight not just for animals and for the world but for each one of our individual selves, as well, for our own good conscience, so that we can go to sleep at night, so we can look ourselves in the mirror the next day.



So, let us undertake, and let us persist. On all levels, national, state, and local, to close down these atrocities, these blights on the conscience of the human race.

We'll be persisting all this next year, all the rest of our lives. So, you can look for us; we'll be coming to your door, with big smiles, lots of buttons, and lots of literature. And if you open your door wide enough, with a big hug.